



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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Baucus Comments on Lifting Cuba Travel Ban

I want to begin by thanking my colleagues, in both the House and the Senate. In particular, I want to thank our colleagues from the House Cuba Working Group for their tireless efforts and leadership in the fight to bring sanity to U.S. policy towards Cuba. Their establishment of a Working Group has served as a model for our efforts in the Senate.

I also want to thank Senators Enzi and Dorgan for their leadership to end the travel ban. It's been a pleasure to work with them and with Members from the House. And now, we are all here together - Republicans and Democrats, the House and the Senate - behind a single bill. And that, I think, is one of the most important messages of the day: We are united and working together to end the travel ban as soon as possible.

An overwhelming majority of Americans support this policy. Certainly the people of Montana do - that was the clear message I heard when I met with people in Great Falls a couple of weeks ago. Most Senators and Congressmen also want to ease the travel restrictions. And our bill is supported by a broad range of organizations - from businesses and farmers, to human rights groups, as well as the Cuban dissidents themselves.

This legislation could not come at a more important time. The incidents of the past two months - the arrests, the executions, even the new travel regulations - demonstrate the truly dangerous conditions under which the Cuban people live. They also highlight the dangerous role U.S. policy plays in provoking these conditions. The crisis should serve as a catalyst for a new and genuine debate in Washington over U.S. policy. And more than anything today, that is what I want to ask for: a genuine debate on this issue - and an up-or-down vote.

I have asked the Senate leadership for time on the floor to debate Cuba, and this bill in particular. This issue merits an open discussion, and I hope we will have the opportunity to do so this year.